



Children's Ministry Protection Policies and Practices

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Second Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Second from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

DEFINITION

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” includes all persons from birth through 5th grade.

The term “staff” includes paid employees of the church.

The term “volunteer” means anyone unpaid who is serving in the ministry to children.

The term “2PC” is an abbreviation for Second Presbyterian Church.

MANDATORY REPORTING UNDER TENNESSEE LAW

Teachers, volunteers and staff are often in a position to observe the physical and emotional signs of child abuse, neglect or sexual abuse. Tennessee law (Statutes: §§ 37-1-102(b)(1), (12), (23); 37-1-403; 37-1-602(a); 37-1-605) requires reporting of suspected child abuse, neglect or sexual abuse to the Department of Children's Services at 1-877-237-0004 (24 Hour Number). If you believe the child is in immediate danger, also contact the local police department at 901-528-2222. Specifically, Tennessee law requires immediate reporting by any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect. Tennessee's reporting obligations apply to suspected brutality, abuse, neglect or sexual abuse regardless of the child's relationship with the individual that may have committed the alleged conduct. A report should include, to the extent known, the name, address, telephone number and age of the child, the name, address and telephone number of the person responsible for the care of the child and the facts requiring the report along with any other pertinent information. Tennessee law grants individuals immunity from prosecution (criminal and civil) arising out of the reporting of abuse or neglect as long as it has been reported in “good faith.” Failure to report suspected child abuse, neglect or sexual abuse can result in criminal and civil liability.

SELECTION OF WORKERS

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with 2PC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Volunteers must either be a member or regular attender of Second who is planning to join the church.

Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign the ministry volunteer online application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

Personal Interview

Prior to or upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for volunteering in the Children's Ministry.

Reference Checks

All applicants must have a minimum of two references fill out the ministry volunteer online reference form as part of the application process. Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, a member of the ministry staff may personally contact one or both of the references for additional information. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at church.

Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteers.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she or he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Protection Policy Team or Senior Leadership team on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. These decisions will be documented and maintained on file with the application and background check report. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

All church staff, regardless of their area of responsibility will be fully vetted through a personal interview, as well as drug, reference and criminal background checks

PROTECTION PROCEDURES & PRACTICES

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. No adult should be alone in a room with child at anytime. In the event that a volunteer finds themselves in a room with children without another adult present, he or she should:

- Find another room with at least one volunteer in it and wait with them until more volunteers arrive.
- Ask the parent dropping off their child to wait with you until another volunteer arrives.

At the end of program, volunteers should stay together until the last student is picked up so that no volunteer is left alone with children.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for workers (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be under the supervision of two adults and must never be left alone with children.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Physical Contact

Physical contact with children should be minimal and only in the presence of other adults. Appropriate touching should be limited to handshakes, fist bumps, “high five’s” brief hugs (3 seconds or less) or a brief touch on the shoulder.

Workers may not have children sit on their lap while the room is darkened or when other workers are not present.

Under no circumstances should a volunteer (or anyone other than a child’s parent) administer physical discipline of any kind. See “Discipline Policy” below.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of 2PC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with Ministry Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child’s name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Children in grades 2-5 may be sent in pairs to the restroom without the supervision of an adult. However, please monitor this situation closely by noting the time of departure and arrival, their appearance before and after, etc.

Restroom policies will be posted in all children’s ministry bathrooms, classrooms and nursery areas.

Security and Safety

Always be on the lookout for suspicious people around the classrooms. Report any uncertain or unusual circumstances to the director and/or politely ask them for their reasons for being there.

All classes should stay in their appointed areas for the duration of the program time. If volunteers desire to take their class outside of the designated areas, they must contact and get prior permission from the Director/staff to do so.

Pick-up Procedures

A parent must pick-up their own child in Pre-K – 2nd grade.

An older sibling (3rd grade and above) may only pick-up IF the parent has notified the teachers that this is acceptable to them. Please make a note of this with a name of who picked up the child. (Note kept in classroom) You can always call a member of the Children’s staff if you are not sure.

3rd – 5th graders are dismissed to leave on their own but should have a pre-established meeting place with their parents.

If another adult tries to pick up a child, we will check the I.D. of the person to be sure they are on the approved pick-up list given by the parent.

Volunteer Training

The 2PC Children’s Ministry will provide training on this child protection policy and other important ministry equipping tools to all childcare staff and volunteers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All volunteers are required to attend these training events.

HEALTH PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all children at 2PC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever (anything over 99.6 degrees), diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Persistent cough
- Eye or skin infections (unexplained, impetigo, boils, ringworm, etc.)
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease (chicken pox, mumps, rubella, measles, pertussis, scarlet fever, etc.)

Children who are observed to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of 2PC not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Director of Children's Ministry to develop a plan of action.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, utilize the first aid kits made available as appropriate. The volunteer will notify the Ministry Director and the child's parent of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- Any head injuries, regardless of severity, should be reported to the parents of the child and the Ministry Director.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the Ministry Director. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention for any injury, an incident report will be completed to keep on file in confidence in the church office.

Fire:

If you hear the fire alarm – reassure the children that everything will be OK and try to keep them calm.

- Look for the fire evacuation plan located in each classroom to help guide you where to go.
- Volunteers will need to line the children up and take a count. As you leave the classroom, be sure a volunteer is at the front and end of the line to keep an eye on the children as you move throughout the building to the outside.
- **Parents may not take their children until you are in the designated area.**

Lost Child:

If a child becomes lost during Sunday School, immediately notify the Ministry Director (text and/or call them – numbers should be posted in the classroom). The Ministry Director will then notify security.

- Check all areas where the child went missing while calling the name of the child.
- If the child is not found in 5 minutes, the staff will contact the parents.
- **Parents will be informed regardless of the time frame the child went missing.**

Weather Emergency:

If there is a tornado or other weather emergency – reassure the children that everything will be OK and try to keep them calm.

- Look for the weather evacuation plan located in each classroom to help guide you where to go.
- Volunteers will need to line the children up and take a count. As you leave the classroom, be sure a volunteer is at the front and end of the line to keep an eye on the children as you move throughout the building to the designated area.
- **Parents may not take their children until you are in the designated area.**
- Once the threat has passed- children can go back to the classrooms.